Minimum Forest Cover

184. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that as per Government norms, the minimum forest cover to be maintained is 33%;

(b) whether inspite of this, the average forest cover is 19%, out of which almost half consists of degraded forests; and

(c) what steps are being taken by Government to meet the norms of 33% as laid down?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) National Forest Policy envisages that the country should have a minimum of one-third land area under forest or tree cover.

(b) As per the State of Forest Report, 1997, forest cover of the country is 19.27%, out of which open degraded forests are 7.95%.

(c) The major steps taken by the Government to increase the forests cover are:

(i) Afforestation programmes are undertaken by State/UT Governments from their own resources as well as with financial assistance from Government of India.

(ii) Externally aided projects are being implemented for development and preservation of forests.

(iii) Guidelines to all State/UT Governments to involve village communities in protection and regeneration of degraded forests.

(iv) Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 has been enacted to regulate the diversion of forest lands.

(v) A net work of protected areas has been established.

(vi) Recently, Ministry has prepared National Forestry Action Programme to enhance the contribution of forestry and tree

resources for ecological stability and people oriented development through improvement in investment for conservation and development of forest resources.

Seizure of Animal Hides

†185. SHRI JHUMUK LAL BHENDIA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that under a special drive launched by the Department of Commercial Tax on 19th December, 1999, 58 hides of wild animals, including lion's hides, worth Rs. 1.5 to 2.00 crores have been recovered from Sahibabad;

(b) if so, what are the names of wild animals, whom these hides belong to and what action has been taken against the persons involved in large scale killing of wild animals and smuggling hides thereof; and

(c) what is the State-wise number of such incidents since 1998 and what measures have been taken to prevent them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) The Sales Tax Department recovered 58 skins of wild animals at Ghaziabad checkpost. It is difficult to ascertain the cost because these products are not consumed in the country.

(b) The names of wild animals are given in Statement-I (See below). Prosecution has been launched by the State Government against the offenders.

(c) As reported by the State Governments, the number of such incidences is given in Statement-II (See below). The measures taken to prevent such incidences are given in Statement-Ill.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.